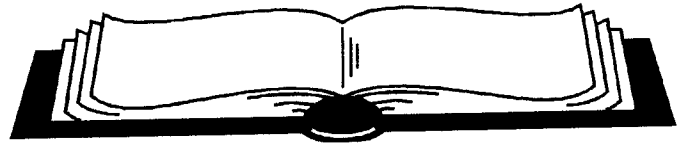


NEW JERSEY

2000-2001
Guidelines and
Application**BEST
PRACTICES****Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000**

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category	<u>Language Arts Literacy</u>	(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	<u>Reading For Life</u>	
Number of Schools with Practice	<u>1</u> (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)	

County	<u>Warren</u>
District (Proper Name)	<u>Hackettstown School District</u>
Address	<u>315 Washington St.</u> Street/P. O. Box <u>Hackettstown</u> <u>07840</u> City Zip Code
Telephone	<u>908-850-6500</u> Fax <u>908-850-6544</u> Email <u>jcalabro@hackettstown.org</u>
Chief School Administrator	<u>Joanne Calabro</u>
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	<u>Hackettstown Middle School</u>
Address	<u>500 Washington St.</u> Street/P. O. Box <u>Hackettstown</u> <u>07840</u> City Zip Code
Telephone	<u>908-852-8554</u> Fax <u>908-850-6544</u> Email <u>dsosmuns@fast.net</u>
Principal	<u>David. S. Osmun</u>
Program Developer(s)	<u>Bruce Gordon</u>
Application Prepared By	<u>Bruce Gordon</u>
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<u>Joanne Calabro</u>

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY	
Approved: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	County Superintendent's Signature <u>Will N.R.</u>

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2000-2001 APPLICATION**

Application Requirements: Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

- RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS and ACCURATE.** No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements
- USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- Application must be **keyboarded on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. (This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.)**
- KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to all the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages.** Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for accuracy and clarity.
- The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page.** Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
- The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.**
- The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by November 27, 2000, with the Itemized List of District Applications form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.**

Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name	Reading For Life
Elementary School			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle School	5 - 8	Number of Schools with Practice	1
Junior High School		Number of Districts with Practice	1
High School		Location	Urban/City Suburban With Urban Characteristics
Other: _____			Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages
	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	
	(family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

- Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
- List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
- Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
- Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement.

“Reading For Life” is a unit that brings together small groups of students (four to six) to discuss and examine books from a particular genre of literature; specifically, historical fiction books for the purpose of this application. By investigating and applying the attributes of an involved, proactive reader, students gain firsthand experience with literature and its potential for bringing meaning to, and enhancing, their lives. Through the dynamic process of reading, reflection, and discussion, students gain an awareness of literature as a life skill that can provide them with both entertainment and insight into their lives.

After being presented with a book jacket type summary of the books being used for this unit, including the reading level and number of pages, each student selects three books she/he would be most interested in reading. Literary groups for each book are then established, and a reading schedule is distributed which divides each book into four reading assignments with a discussion date for each reading assignment. In preparation for this unit, a series of directed reading lessons are presented to the class. Through simulation and modeling, the class examines the many characteristics of a proactive reader, and the many different ways to think about and respond to the literature being read. Journal response writing skills are also reviewed in directed lessons, with many writing models from previous literary groups exhibited and shared. Finally, each student applies his/her understanding of the lessons taught by developing a *Reader's Response Journal* for a recent book the entire class has read as a group.

During the student-directed discussions for each book, each student shares at least one of her/his journal responses with the group for further consideration and reaction in an open-ended forum. The teacher's role in the discussion group is to facilitate discussion and keep the group focused on the insights presented, until all members of the group have had an opportunity to respond. After completing the four scheduled discussions of the book, each group works cooperatively to complete a culminating activity for the book they have read and discussed together. For the genre of historical fiction, an *Alphabet Book* is created which details the people, places and events associated with the particular historical occurrence or time period.

During this unit students will:

- 1) demonstrate time management skills by preparing reading assignments and journal entries independently;
- 2) apply analytical, evaluative and inferential reading comprehension skills to their reading;
- 3) apply the writing process to their journal entries;
- 4) demonstrate the skill of participating as both speaker and listener in a discussion forum;
- 5) use a variety of research tools to collect information on historical events or time periods;
- 6) demonstrate proficient computer word processing skills;
- 7) work cooperatively to complete a culminating group project;
- 8) attain an understanding of the historical fiction genre of literature.

This unit replaces students' traditional perception of the classroom reading experience, which is teacher-directed, with a more personal student-directed experience. Students become involved in the selection of the book they will read, as well as with how they will construct meaning and understanding of the book. Student ownership of the reading process leads to a more meaningful reading experience for them. The small group open-ended discussion forum provides students with an alternative to the more traditional assessment practices utilized by a teacher. Technology is incorporated into the unit through the use of the Internet and CD-ROMS to research historical people, places, and events for the *Alphabet Books*, as well as through the use of word processing programs for the writing of student journals and in the creation of text for the *Alphabet Books*. Through the interdisciplinary approach of this unit, students become increasingly motivated to learn about and understand the history of a time period or event.

High student achievement is promoted in a variety of ways. The small group organization of the literary group provides the teacher with a more accurate assessment of the students as readers, and at the same time, gives the students more opportunity to share and interact with one another. Students become more involved

and motivated when teachers empower them and give them ownership of their learning activities. Cooperative learning and group processing skills produce higher achievement and increased retention, greater use of higher level reasoning skills, greater intrinsic motivation, and more on-task behavior. As educators, we know that involving our students will lead to greater understanding on their part.

2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s).

Workplace Readiness Standards

Standard #2 - All students will use information, technology and other tools:

As part of the culminating activity for this unit, students will access information on the Internet and CD-ROMs, as well as use reference and trade books to collect information on the particular historical event or time period for which they are creating an *Alphabet Book*.

Standard #3 - All students will use critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills:

Students are mandated to apply critical thinking skills to the literature they are reading. As with all student-initiated learning, students will go through a decision-making process as they determine how and to what part of the literature they will respond in their *Reader Response Journal*. They will also need to decide the most effective ways to present their historical event or period when they complete their culminating activity.

Standard #4 - All students will demonstrate self-management skills:

Each book is divided into four separate reading assignments with the discussion group dates listed for each reading assignment. Each student must manage his/her time outside the classroom to prepare the reading assignment and *Reader Response Journal* segment. During each discussion of the reading assignment, students are expected to provide and receive constructive feedback from their group members, and thus learn the integration of ability, effort, and achievement. During the culminating activity, students apply group-processing skills to share the work and complete the group project.

Language and Arts Literacy Core Curriculum Standards

3.1 All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences by:

- using their *Response Journals* to assist them in discussion groups to convey thoughts, ideas and opinions about the book;
- speaking persuasively in discussion groups to influence the opinions of others using clear, concise and organized language;
- modifying their responses after gaining feedback from others in the discussion group;
- alternating roles as speaker and listener in discussion groups;
- defending opinions about the book using specific text to support their statements;
- recognizing when the discussion group does not understand an opinion, and making appropriate adjustments.

3.2 All students will actively listen in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources by:

- listening critically and attentively in discussion groups, demonstrating an understanding of ideas being developed about the book, making appropriate responses, and asking relevant questions;
- recognizing persuasive techniques and credible opinions in discussion groups, and altering opinions based on new information.

3.3 All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes by:

- using reading to assist in the writing of students' *Reader Response Journals*;
- writing from thoughts and feelings about their reading experience;
- writing for a variety of purposes including: responding to reading, informing, learning and persuading, writing on self-selected topics;
- understanding that writing can influence the opinion of others.

3.4 All students will read various materials and tests with comprehension and critical analysis by:

- reading literally, inferentially and critically;
- identifying parts in a book that support their opinion;
- identifying and discussing elements of a story.

Social Studies Core Curriculum Standards

6.3 All students will acquire historical understanding of political ideas and institutions throughout the history of the world by:

- selecting appropriate people, places, and events to research and write about in their culminating *Alphabet Book* activity.

3) Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

The sixth grade student population that included mainstreamed resource center, basic skills, gifted and talented, as well as regular education students, participated in this unit. Utilizing a team teaching model during the second marking period of the school year did this. For the first five weeks, I taught this unit to my integrated language arts classes. After five weeks I switched language classes with the other Language Arts teacher, and taught her two sections this unit while she presented a *Short Story* unit to my classes.

Assessment for this project can be characterized as ongoing and cumulative in nature, with an emphasis on teacher observation, rubrics, and student self-assessment through the use of surveys. Evaluative standards were clearly defined and communicated to students through the use of rubrics, by providing models of *Reader Response Journals* and *Alphabet Books*, and by simulating the characteristics of an effective literary discussion group. The assessment tools that were utilized, accurately measured student performance and gave students the opportunity to reflect on themselves as learners.

Observations - Teacher observation as an assessment tool begins early in this project with the guided simulation, and continues through the completion of the group's *Alphabet Book*. By observing students and keeping anecdotal notes of a simulated literary discussion group, the teacher can accurately measure the concept understanding of each student. Individual or small group reinforcement activities can be provided for students who do not grasp what can be a very abstract concept to them. The teacher tapes the literary discussion groups while he/she facilitates the discussion group. Anecdotal records are kept on each student's participation within the discussion group. These records are used to develop the student rubric for the level and quality of participation within the discussion group, and to identify students who are struggling with the requirements to be met in discussion groups. Small group or individual conferences are provided to give students the opportunity to have a positive discussion group experience the next time the group meets. Teacher observation continues with the cooperative culminating activity of producing an *Alphabet Book* outlining the historical event or time period. Observation of this dynamic learning activity can lead to anything from working with a student on time management and organization skills, to an individual lesson on collecting or processing information for an entry in the *Alphabet Books*.

Rubrics - Rubrics as an assessment tool have the advantage of making the grading criteria known to the students, thus ensuring accountability and reducing teacher subjectivity when evaluating students' work. For this project several rubrics are used for evaluation purposes. Each student's *Reader Response Journal* is evaluated using a rubric that measures the student's critical thinking as a reader, his/her ability to organize and develop a written response in the manner of a proactive reader, and the student's skills in writing mechanics. A rubric is also developed to measure the student's participation within the discussion group. The criteria for this rubric reflect the Core Curriculum Content Standards for being an effective speaker and listener in a discussion group setting. A third rubric is used to evaluate the student's contribution to the group's *Alphabet Book* in terms of the quantity and quality of work produced. All rubrics are distributed and explained as part of the introduction to this unit.

Self-assessment & Survey - During this unit, students are asked to reflect on their own participation and contributions to their group, as well as on the overall effectiveness of their group in working together, based on the principles of cooperative learning. Students are required to keep a reading log that accurately reflects their reading progress and preparation for their four reading discussion groups. Before handing in their *Reader Response Journals*, students self-evaluate their writing using a checklist that identifies the characteristics of an effective journal response and the writing mechanics they should always evaluate. After each discussion group meets, students self-evaluate both their individual and the group's performance by responding to a teacher- created survey sheet that provides direct questions to which to respond, using a rating scale. Before beginning the *Alphabet Books*, each group is given a survey record sheet that organizes and keeps track of individual contributions made toward the completion of the book. For each page of the book, the survey sheet records who researched the information for the entry, who wrote and edited the entry, and who illustrated the entry for the book. Before individual rubrics are completed, each member of the group has to sign this completed survey sheet signifying that the survey sheet accurately reflects each individual's contribution toward the *Alphabet Book*. Throughout this self-assessment and survey process, individuals and groups are monitored, with conferences held as needed to help improve performance.

Numeric rubrics were developed to assess the three major components of the unit: 1) discussion groups 2) written responses to the literature 3) cooperative culminating activity (*Alphabet Books*). As a group, the sixth grade students attained an average score of 84% on the literary discussion rubric, 87% on the written response rubric, and 91% on the alphabet book rubric that measured their individual performance within the group framework.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

This unit can be easily replicated in any school district because of its minimal cost. Multiple copies of paperback books might already exist in the school library or can be collected by using different libraries in the area. The only hardware necessary is a micro cassette tape recorder that is used to tape the literary discussion groups. I would strongly suggest that a teacher considering this unit do much of the preparation (the reading of the many books to be used at the same time) during the summer when there is more time available to read and reflect on the different books being used.

This unit, "Reading For Life," encourages students to read for pleasure, and reinforces an understanding that reading, like other recreational activities, can enhance their lives. Students who begin to see reading as a life skill become more motivated readers. As a result, they read more and become better readers. As their reading experiences grow and mature they gain a better understanding of themselves, their family and friends, and the world they live in.